**EAHR 811 Response – Chapters 3 and 4**

**SQ3R Technique**

As I began to survey and question chapter three, I generated several questions for myself. My main questions were what is the difference between objectivist and subjectivist epistemology and what is the classification schema for evaluation? As I read through chapter four, I noted a couple more important questions focused on how does Metfessel and Michael’s evaluation paradigm compare to the CDC framework and what are the strengths and limitations of the objective-oriented evaluation approach. As I actively read through the chapters and began making comparisons to previous knowledge and readings, I began to find the answers to my questions.

**What is Difference between Objectivist and Subjectivist Epistemology?**

The terms objectivist and subjectivist epistemology were new to me. Based on the chapter, objectivism requires that evaluation information must be “scientifically objective” (p. 60). To further enhance the definition, the evaluation results are said to be reproducible and verifiable by other competent individuals. This method of evaluation is definitely my preference as I think very objectively and prefer producing similar results from one evaluation to another. I also prefer utilizing methods of evaluation that follow a scientific approach whereby the results can be easily collected and analyzed. Subjectivism requires “an appeal to experience rather than a scientific method” (p. 60). Although I believe that experience holds a great deal of merit, I struggle with evaluation methods that are not understood or reproducible by others. I was intrigued to read that the objectivist approach is highly criticized. As a result of my bias, I find difficulty in criticizing this method. However, based on my preferences I can see validity in the criticism of subjectivism due to the varying and contradictory conclusions.

**What is the Classification Schema for Evaluation?**

The classifications of evaluation approaches seem to be endless. Based on chapter three’s information, I have been made aware of five additional categories. These categories focus on dimensions of utilitarian to intuitionist-pluralist evaluation according to House and include:

1. Objectives-oriented approaches – specifying goals and objectives and determining how they have been attained.
2. Management-oriented approaches – indentifying and meeting the informational needs of management.
3. Consumer-oriented approaches – developing evaluative information on products for use by consumers.
4. Expertise-oriented approaches – direct application of professional expertise to judge the quality of whatever is evaluated.
5. Participant –oriented approaches – involvement of participants to determine values, criteria, needs, data, and conclusions for evaluation.

The methodologies and models outlined in this chapter have expanded my knowledge of the role of the evaluator and how one views evaluation.

**How does Metfessel and Michael’s Evaluation Paradigm compare to the CDC Framework?**

Based on the readings the following table outlines the two frameworks:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Metfessel and Michael’s Evaluation Paradigm** | **CDC Framework** |
| 1. Involve stakeholders as facilitators of program evaluation. | 1. Engage stakeholders |
| 1. Formulate a cohesive model of goals and specific objectives. | 2. Describe the program |
| 3. Translate specific objectives into a communicable form. | 3. Focus the evaluation design |
| 4. Select or construct instruments to furnish measures allowing interferences about program effectiveness. | 4. Gather credible evidence |
| 5. Carry out periodic observations using content-valid tests, scales, and other behavioural measures. | 5. Justify conclusions |
| 6. Analyze data using appropriate methods. | 6. Ensure use and sharing of lessons |
| 7. Interpret the data using standards of desired levels of performance over all measures. |  |
| 8. Develop recommendations for the further implementation, modification, and revision of broad goals and specific objectives. |  |

Although both approaches are very valuable and the frameworks focus on the several of the same ideas and would likely create the same output, the Metfessel and Michael’s evaluation model seems to be more specific. Based on the increased number of steps, the Metfessel and Michael’s approach may take a greater amount of time and may not be suitable for all situations.

**What are the Strengths and Limitations of the Objective-oriented Evaluation Approach?**

Based on my reading from chapter three, I determined that I had a preference for the objective-oriented evaluation approach and was intrigued to see how widely criticized it was. Chapter four assisted in highlighting the strengths and weaknesses of the approach and aiding in my understanding of its criticism. The follow table outlines the various strengths and weaknesses:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Strengths** | **Weaknesses** |
| * Simplistic | * Lacks a real evaluative component |
| * Easily understood | * Lacks standards to judge the importance of observed discrepancies between objectives and performance levels |
| * Easy to follow and implement | * Neglects the value of the objectives |
| * Produces information relevant to the mission | * Ignores important alternatives that should be considered |
|  | * Neglects transactions that occur within the program or activity being evaluated |
|  | * Omits evidence of program value not reflected in its own objective |
|  | * Promotes a linear, inflexible approach to evaluation |

Based on the explanation, this model is “simple to novice evaluators only partially familiar with its philosophical and practical difficulties” (p. 83). As a result of this statement and my limited experience with program evaluation, perhaps this is the rationale for my preference. I am intrigued to see how and if my opinion changes as the course progresses.

**PART II – Personal Response**

Based on the reading I have completed thus far, I am very surprised by the many different ways that evaluation can be done. I am really gaining an appreciation for how rich and diverse of a field it actually is. My next discovery is to determine how to choose the best approach for evaluation.

**How to Choose an Approach for your Evaluation**

Based on the five classification schema for the approaches to evaluation outlined in chapter four, I believe that combining different approaches or utilizing varying approaches at different stages in the project or course is the most suitable. Being clear about the purposes of evaluation will help evaluators in deciding which approach or combination of approaches is best for their respective needs. The philosophy and values of the organization will also be important to consider. For example, if the organization is one in which many people are consulted and involved in decision-making, then a participant-focused evaluation might be the best approach.

Truly, the basic issue is alignment. The evaluation approach chosen should be aligned with the purposes of the evaluation and the philosophy and values of the organization. It should also align with the expertise of your evaluator. Some evaluation practitioners are comfortable with a variety of approaches, while others have specialized in particular types of evaluation. Determining the correct approach is a very important area to explore with potential evaluators and is one that I intend to advance as I complete more of this course and also am enabled to be involved in the evaluation processes at my work.

**References**

Fitzpatrick, J.L., Sanders, J.R., & Worthern, B.R. (2004). *Program evaluation: Alternative approaches and practical guidelines.* Boston: Pearson Education, Inc.